



# The Sunday SUN

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## College grads reflect on being class of 9/11

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### BAY SWEEPS BRIDGE IN NARROWS PLAYOFFS

SPORTS ■ C1

Eating Right

### CH-CH-CH-CH- CHOICES

Turn and face the grains.

YOUR LIFE ■ E1



Some widows must  
clean out their  
husbands' closets.  
Natacha Sesko  
faces a more  
daunting task.



Staff photo by Steve Zugschwerdt

Natacha Sesko is dealing with old boats on her waterfront  
property at the end of Pennsylvania Avenue in Bremerton.

# Salvaging a life

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# Natacha Sesko: "Here, they say you have freedom to buy anything."

from previous page

"When someone at school needed car parts, they could sneak into your yard and steal them at 3 o'clock in the morning," she said. "Daddy had five million ideas, and I think he fully intended to do all of them."

Natacha might complain about the oddities Bill brought home from auctions, but she believed it was not her place to question his growing collections.

"Here, they say you have freedom to buy anything," Natacha said. "My husband had a lot of toys. I would say, 'Whatever your decision is, I will support you.' I don't know American law."

## The showdown

The county eventually forced Bill Sesko to clean up the five acres around Natacha's Pavilion and his house on Arsenal Way, which he accomplished by moving some materials to other locations. In 1991, he annexed the property into the city under "industrial park" zoning, which he believed would be the answer. But Janet Luncford, the city's abatement officer, said even with that zoning, Sesko would have had to store his stuff indoors.

Another storage site was a half-acre waterfront property on Pennsylvania Avenue.

As his collections grew, the city began separate abatement proceedings in 1995, leading to another series of lost appeals.

"My frustration," he wrote in 2003, "is similar to what the Wright Brothers might have experienced if the material they collected to develop their airplane was declared junk. ... Our Constitution guarantees security in personal property."

In 2001, as the city moved to clean up his two properties, Bill Sesko relocated some materials to other sites, including land on Pennsylvania Avenue owned by Paul McConkey. That prompted the city to pursue McConkey, forcing him to evict Sesko and all his stuff.

As the legal dust settled, Kitsap County Superior Court Judge Karlynn Haberly ordered that only limited household items be left around their house on Arsenal Way, specifically "one metal frame tent, one pair of skis, one broom, one hose, one shovel, one rake, two wheelbarrows, two barbecues..." In all, about two dozen specific items were allowed, along with six vehicles.

Natacha said her husband found it especially outrageous that a court could tell him how many brooms he could keep.



Staff photo by Carolyn J.

**Natacha records a voice-over for a radio promotion of the upcoming Seattle International Film Festival. Working with her is Matt McConkey, who wrote the script.**



Staff photo by Carolyn J. Yaschur

**Once a professional dancer, Natacha teaches the rumba to Dianne Mangio, 20, middle, and Miracle Metcalf, 16, in Dianne's parents' Bremerton home.**



Staff photo by Carolyn J.

**Like most grandmothers, Natacha enjoys playing with her granddaughter, Nicola Hitchum. Nicola is Sonia's child.**



## The cleanup

By December 2001, the city had hired a cleanup contractor, Buckley Recycling Company. State law allowed the city to charge the Seskos for the cleanup, but it required they be given a credit for all property sold.

David Horton, an attorney representing the city, said city officials were unable to find a contractor willing to set up an auction. "The value of the property was worth less than the cost of storing and auctioning it," he said.

City officials accepted Buckley's bid of nearly \$140,000 to clean up the Arsenal Way property, giving the Seskos a "salvage credit" of \$45,000. After Bill Sesko removed about half the stuff himself, the city reduced the salvage credit to about \$19,000 but never adjusted the cleanup bill.

Allen Nowlin, a friend of the Seskos, watched most of the cleanup and claims Buckley removed valuable heavy equipment, vehicles and tens of thousands of dollars worth of recyclable metals that could have paid for the cleanup if they had taken time to sort out the good stuff.

"They didn't care," he said, "They were getting paid no matter what they did."

Natacha admits she doesn't know the value of what was hauled away, but she believes that a fair accounting would have covered the cleanup costs many times over.

Horton says the Seskos had no room to complain.

"The city gave them years to do this," he said. "They don't see the stuff they have collected on these properties as junk, and clearly it is. One's man's junk is another man's treasure."

## Health problems

Bill realized something was wrong as he hastily moved vehicles and equip-

ment while the contractors started their cleanup. Constantly exhausted, he felt a growing pain in his chest. After doctors discovered cancer, he and his wife began a yearlong battle, trying modern medicine as well as traditional Chinese remedies.

He was dying, but he continued to work and meet with lawyers, looking for ways to reduce the cleanup bill, which had reached \$252,000 for both

properties.

"Chinese people say if you are a person with cloth shoes, you don't want to fight people with leather shoes," Natacha said. "But Bill thinks it's his right. He doesn't want to give in."

Daughters Sonia, living in Las Vegas, and Tanya, living in San Diego, moved back home to be with their father. The youngest, Natalie, was living in Bremerton.

"We pulled together to be with Dad," Sonia said. "He knew he was dying, but there was constant pressure to take care of things. He was afraid his wife would lose everything."

Following Bill's death, Nowlin and other friends helped Natacha sort out the equipment at scattered locations. Bill always knew where to find invoices, titles, documents and keys, she said, but to her they were just piles

and piles of paper.

"I was so stressed out," she said. "I want all the paper to go away. The paper was overwhelming me. I was at one piece at a time."

She lit a fire in place and started tossing paper, mistakenly titles to vehicles she to sell.

Some widows of their husband's close friends have a much bigger problem.

"All my life, I never let go of his stuff," she said, tearing up in her eyes. "I have to get rid of it, but I have time to do it."

Natacha is finding one step at a time — selling a vehicle, cleaning up and taking back her own life.

The battle over costs is now in the 10th State Court of Appeals, where Natacha seeks that the city's contract with Buckley was illegal rate lawsuit in federal court, alleging civil rights violations.

Natacha has found a niche helping Asian and actors find work and continues to be in her community. Current projects include forming a Las Vegas imitator group, Elvis and Madonna, and touring China.

If Bill Sesko had lived, he would have turned Natacha misses him but often feels his presence.

"If he were here, I would know what to do," she said. "Just give me time, and everything will be done, and I will be free again."



Staff photo by Steve Zugschwerdt

**Natacha paddles out to one of two boats she owns offshore of the Pennsylvania Avenue property. She is eager to sell those boats and get the owners to remove other boats dumped there years ago.**

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